

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, May 3, 1917, with transcript

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL TO MABEL (Hubbard) BELL Houseboat "Get Away" Beinn Bhreagh Harbor. May 3, 1917. My sweet darling little wifie:

Your letters and telegrams are a great comfort to me — but they don't make up for your absence. This morning I was glad that you were not here for the ground is covered with snow and we have a touch of winter back again. We now have a cold drizzle of rain so that I do not feel like taking my usual walk. However, I am warm and comfortable in the houseboat, and John McDermid is taking good care of me.

I can't have apparatus made here without stopping other work, and Casey is rushing along his Government work at a tremendous rate as he expects the Government Inspector here on Saturday. We have decided to have Byrnes and his men make the large floats I want although this involves a temporary stoppage of work at the Point.

Baldwin, Byrnes and I held a conference here today on the floats and the work will be begun at once. No use making experiments unless they are CONCLUSIVE ; and this means using large apparatus with pulls large enough to minimize errors of observation.

The Florida experiments were not encouraging but the pulls were so small that we cannot rely upon the results obtained. I don't like to build a big machine 2 before a small model of it has been tried — but it is really easier to build a big fellow than a dwarf and we will have the satisfaction of knowing where we are decisively . The new floats are to be 15 feet long and 3 feet deep at the stern, with a thickness of only 6 inches! A veritable plank upon edge.

Bottom a segment of a circle having a radius of 44 feet.

Library of Congress

Calculation shows that the three floats together will support a load of 2000 pounds — whereas total weight of apparatus will be limited to 1000 pounds so as to compare with the gig experiments. We expect that whole apparatus will weigh about 500 pounds so that it will be necessary to load the machine with lead placed in the floats to bring the totals up to 1000 pounds.

Casey anticipates poor results on account of skin friction and fears the plank is too thin . We are going to try it anyway as it gives us the right displacement with plenty of margin for free-board. If we desire to make it thicker we can easily take off the bottom and put a wider one on. The sides will need no change.

John McDermid has completed his apparatus for reflecting a light under water and we will try it the first calm dark night.

Want to see how far off we can detect the light through the water.

3

Don't know what David means by drying vegetables. If he means drying up green vegetables as grass is dried to hay — I should think there would be no difficulty about it. Vegetable hay — just add water when cooking and there you are. Simply a question of dessication — Is that it?

Your loving husband, Alec.